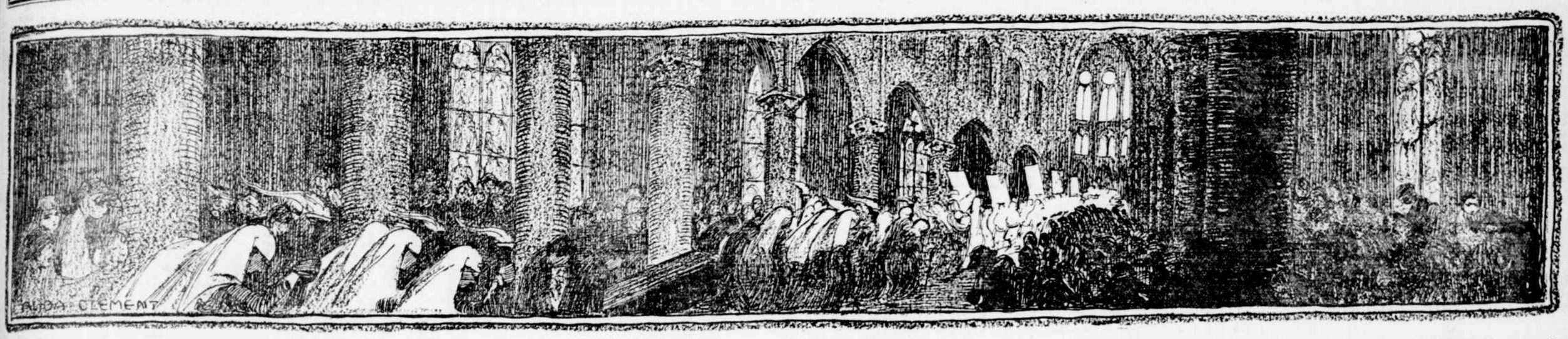
THE SOUL OF FRANCE---A FETE DIEU AT NOTRE DAME



By MARION BONSALL DAVIS

Volunteer Worker in the Red Cross. Served for Months Near the Front in France, Doing Relief Work for Soldiers and Refugees.

SINCE Good Friday we have lived in our new world, and have been finding our new selves. Mingled as we are now in this world-pain and terror, we too have lived some of those breathless moments when a direct current seems to charge weak human beings with new power, endurance and courage.

Any one who has been in France since August, 1914, has seen with his eyes men, women and children thus lifted. As our men and boys leave for those battlefields which shall be immortal, more and more we will have our part in the great moments of the war.

As they have been lived in humble events and everyday happenings in France, here are a few of them roughly sketched.

We can see ourselves in them, and have faith that, like the French, the more we suffer, the higher will we lift our wings; that we will sing with the "Marseillaise" our own battle hymn:

"He has sounded forth the trumpet that shall never call retreat;
He is sifting out the hearts of men before His judgment seat.
O be swift my soul to answer Him,—be jubilant, my feet!
Our God is marching on."

IN THE kitchen of our simple *pension* in the Rue du Bac in Paris, Blanche, the little maid-of-all-work, had encircled in ink certain dates on the calendar that hung above the sink.

These, she explained in the course of time, were the dates when her husband's brief "*permissions*" (the word they use in France for military leave) were due. She knew quite well that in all probability they would be much, much further apart, but she found it a practical way of keeping up her courage.

She was twenty, he twenty-one and an Alpine Chasseur,—one of the "blue devils" with the jaunty tam pulled over one ear.

She told me that *après la guerre* they will have a cottage in the country, and maybe children.

That is, if he is not killed, or blind, or too mutilated, or too far gone with tuberculosis from the German prison camps.

In any of these events she will continue to be a maid-of-all-work all her life.

She always ran to comply with every request, was thrilled with the gift of a postcard, and said "*Merci*" every time she performed a service.

* * * *

When in June the French churches celebrated the *Fête Dieu*, Blanche was eager that I, as an American, should see the religious processions, so she directed me to the Madeleine in the morning.

Hundreds of people were in the streets, out listening to the fanfares of trumpets and the orchestral marches as the procession of the *Corpus Christi* made its way from the altar out to the piazza of the church.

The façade was hung with banners of red and white and gold. The great piazza and the steps were thronged.

Organ and orchestra within would give pause; the military band outside, with trumpets, fifes and drums, take up the march in great magnificence; then again the organ, very softly, as the procession leaving the portal moved among the kneeling people on the steps.

Young boys in white, scattering rose leaves; older ones swinging censers and carrying lighted torches; white-haired priests and the sacred object canopied, came slowly the long length of the piazza; with many stops, fanfares, then silences.

And among all the throng that the procession moved through,—the mud-stained privates and the officers with many medals, the garlanded children and the old men, the blue-habited nuns and the humble widows in black, the fashionable women, nearly all with long crepe of mourning, men back in civilian clothes walking grotesquely, or without an arm or half blind, and with a stripe around the sleeve—among all that throng there was not one who did not know that the guns around Verdun were at that moment blasting louder than the trumpets; and that men there were falling quieter than the silences.

When the volume of sound had died all the people sang a simple hymn; and for an hour afterward, inside the Madeleine, the only sound was of the old peasant woman collecting *sous* for the seats.

Beside me, for that length of time, knelt a cavalry officer, praying.

* * * *

I remember so vividly the lunch, between the Madeleine in the morning and Notre Dame in the afternoon. It was with American women, volunteer workers with the American Fund for French Wounded.

One taught the blind, one helped in the *cantines*, another made up comfort bags. All cared for helpless ones, at the close of long hard days of packing,—and that means lifting, and nailing, and sawing and hammering.

Miss Davidson showed us a number of war posters and one of the proclamations of executions posted in Belgium, with the name of Edith Cavell heading the list.

And then Notre Dame—that place of sorrows for almost a thousand years. It had been brilliant on the steps of the Madeleine that bright June morning. Here inside the cathedral all was dark save the candles.

It was ineffably tender. A cardinal was in the pulpit and a service going on, with humble people wandering quietly about in the side aisles under the great arches, as they always do there.

And that mass, too, ended with a procession—a procession that was an epic of humanity.

It moved to music of choir and organ, and began with little children who had scarcely more than learned to walk. They were in white and wore wreaths of flowers and toddled along in charge of nuns who had in some cases saved their very lives.

There were boys and girls, a little older, and a little older, in steps, and each group had a banner.

Then probably fifty young girls in their teens, in clouds of white for their first communion. Among them were some charity girls, who had to wear their misty veils over sailor blouses and black skirts.

It was one of these who was star-eyed with the honor of being standard bearer.

There followed women of the parish, the young and middle-aged, nearly all in mourning, each with some sign of suffering. Some had babies in their arms; some, nearing their confinement, led tiny children by the hand.

The older women then, holding the cords of their heavy banner, which was carried by a man; some with faces weeping and distorted; some who seemed to look into paradise. And every woman and every man carried a lighted torch.

After the women came the men, mostly very old or very young; some already crippled in this war—a number of privates and some officers who had swung into the procession from the body of the church.

Next, the priests and bishops; the boys with censers and rose leaves scattered before the canopied priest carrying the Blessed Sacrament; then the cardinal, in red, with eight pages holding up his train; passing, from where we saw him, the white-haired peasant woman by the side altar near the door, selling candles for the glory of France.

A tragic, thrilling company.

We had to leave, but were stopped at the door to make room for those entering.

Two poor hearses had drawn up before the portal, and some humble people who had volunteered from the street were carrying in two rough boxes, followed by twelve Japanese Red Cross nurses from the Japanese Hospital, in dark blue uniforms, with the Red Cross brassard.

Two French soldiers, without family or friends in Paris, had died in their care.

All unexpectedly that strange funeral, entering to a thunderous organ march of pomp and circumstance, climaxed the stately procession within, as it moved its slow way to the altar.

So twelve Japanese Red Cross nurses gave two unknown soldiers who had died for France a glorious burial on the *Fête Dieu* from the Cathedral of Notre Dame.

* * * * * * *

Back at the door of the *pension* in the Rue du Bac, Blanche, who had spent her day at work, opened to me, the outsider, with a face suddenly glad.

"O madame," she cried in French, "you are early. And is it that you will be so kind as to take an early dinner for to-night—you alone, madame, for the rest will not be here. And if you will, then before the doors close I may pray for my husband to-day at Notre Dame!"

★ FOOD SAVING IN THE CITY CANNING AND DRYING KITCHENS ★

Cosmopolitan Gathering of Skilled and Unskilled Women Workers

By ELENE FOSTER

I HAD heard again and again of the "Canning Kitchen Under the Williamsburg Bridge," so when I set out to pay it a visit the way seemed perfectly clear. "Under the Williamsburg Bridge." It was very simple, one just went to the bridge and there it was! But directly I reached the first pier I realized that it was not so simple after all.

I found myself in an open-air market lighted by torches, wherein was sold everything under the sun from vegetables and fish to dress goods and hardware—the most foreign looking market that I have ever seen in this country. I longed to stop and chat with the dark-skinned women with snapping black eyes who presided behind its stalls, but my goal was the canning kitchen. So I trudged on, peering carefully among the shadows for a glimpse of the women who were there to instruct the housewives of the East Side in the gentle art of canning—for I had pictured the city canning kitchen as a sort of open-air replica of the Tribune Institute's canning demonstration at Macy's or Namm's.

Ever and anon, I inquired the way to "the women who are canning," but I was met with blank faces and shakes of the head, and "Me no un'stan'." I finally accosted a khaki-clad figure, with a musket on his shoulder, who was guarding the bridge.

"You go down three blocks, and you'll come to a low, red building. That's it," he said.

I followed his directions and presently I came to a low brick building on which was a sign which read: "City Canning and Drying Kitchen." I pushed open the door.

Do you remember grandmother's kitchen when the piccalilli and chili sauce were simmering on the range? And do you also remember that same kitchen during the jam making season?

If you do, and can imagine the two odors combined and then raised to the nth power, you have a little idea of my first impression of the city canning kitchen.

When, a little later, I was conducted through the kitchen, I separated that odor into its component parts—apricot butter, plum jam, stuffed pickled green peppers, piccalilli, green peas and catsup all being cooked at once. Do you wonder that it put grandmother's kitchen completely in the shade?

The City Canning and Drying Kitchen is just four weeks old, and it is a lusty, healthy child of which its parents, the Mayor's Food Commission, the Women's University Club and the Junior League, may well be proud.

The little red building overlooking the East River is an ideal place for it; but, alas! it is but a temporary shelter. From the first of October until the first of June it is used to prepare luncheons for the school children, and the canning kitchen must go elsewhere.

Neighborhood Boys Sorting Fruit and Vegetables for the Canners

Hundreds of Jars of Preserves on the Shelves

(Photos by Paul Thompson)

One of the Work Tables in the Canning Kitchen

Meanwhile, with its big windows open to the sea breeze, it is a perfect summer kitchen. Its fittings, too, are just the thing for the canning. The huge copper soup caldrons, when fitted with wooden racks for holding the jars, are wonderful for sterilization; eight hundred quart jars can be sterilized at once.

Then, too, the row of big gas ranges are ready for cooking and there are long tables where the vegetables are prepared, and porcelain sinks galore. There are rows of ovens, too, which at first were utilized for drying fruits and vegetables. But the results were not entirely satisfactory, so the drying was given up until such time as a proper dehydrating machine could be procured and installed. This, by the way, is to be right soon, for the United States government not only has presented the city kitchen with a first class machine, but has given the services of an expert to run it.

It is really a wonderful work that this canning kitchen is doing, and it is all being done by volunteer workers. All sorts and conditions of women work side by side in peace and harmony. On the day of my visit there were several girls from the Junior League, two students from Cornell, three women from the upper East Side (whose motor cars waited in the street below), a group of Bohemian women from the lower East Side, and a dozen or more of the women of the neighborhood—a truly cosmopolitan gathering.

These workers are paid by the hour, 20 cents for the women and 10 cents for the boys who help about the kitchen in various ways. Each worker is given a card with rows of little squares, each of which stands for an hour's work. This card is punched with the proper number of hours when the worker leaves.

The workers are not paid in money, however, but in canned food to be taken next winter. A strict account is kept of every cent expended in the canning, so that those in charge know exactly what each jar of fruit or vegetables has cost and the jar is sold at exactly the cost price. The poorer class of workers will, of course, take the cans of edibles for their own family use, but the other and more prosperous workers will donate their jars either to some favorite charitable institution or to the army.

Let me take you on a little tour of inspection through the establishment. Come down this narrow hall to the last door. This opens into the store room. Its walls are lined with tiers of shelves—half filled already (and this after only four weeks' work) with glass jars filled with fruits and vegetables.

There are two thousand quart jars, and goodness knows how many smaller jars and tumblers of jam and jelly. My! But they look good! In the centre of the room a half-dozen of the neighborhood boys are busily picking over baskets and barrels of potatoes.

A black-haired woman with a bright shawl around her shoulders and a cooing baby in her arms follows us in and taps us on the shoulder.

"You sella me two pounda patate," she says, and shows us a penny.

A pretty girl in a white cap and a Hoover apron comes forward.

"You can have two pounds of little ones for a penny," she says, "but the big ones are a penny a pound."

"All righta," smiles the woman, "Babba he likka da little ones," and the pretty girl weighs them out.

"Two pounds of potatoes for a cent. How in the world do you do it?" we ask the pretty girl.

"Why not?" she replies, "we get them for nothing—same as we do everything else."

But we must go on. In the next room a group of a dozen or more women are preparing the vegetables for canning; shelling peas, paring cucumbers and scraping the skin from the summer squash. Each wears a big gingham apron and they work as if their lives depended on it.

Under the window in this room is a row of barrels. Lined up before these is a corresponding line of youngsters, poorly clad, some with bare feet, each clutching a penny; for be it known that these barrels contain big, fat, juicy dill pickles, which are sold two for a cent, and delectable sauerkraut, a wooden dish of which is sold for the same paltry sum. Dill pickles and sauerkraut from the early cabbage are perishable commodities which must be eaten at once.

And now we come to the kitchen proper. There are six big gas ranges along one wall. On the other a row of huge copper caldrons, each steaming away, filled with jars in the process of sterilization. It is a busy place this morning with fifteen or twenty workers, each intent on her own "job."

Some are canning the fresh green peas (these, by the way, are boiled for thirty minutes before they are put in the sterilized jar, then salt and a little sugar are added and the jar put in the sterilizer); others are making the plum or apricot butter; others are packing the stuffed peppers, each neatly tied with a cord, into the jars; others are canning the yellow summer squash. There is no confusion, and very little conversation; it is all quite businesslike.

The city canning kitchen is under the direction of Miss Lilla Frick, who was for a long time the supervisor of domestic science in the Minneapolis public schools, and who has recently established fifty of these municipal canning and drying kitchens in and around Minneapolis. Miss Frick has great hopes of doing the same thing here in New York, for she feels—as I am sure any one who visits the kitchen must feel—that this is but the beginning of a system of food conservation which will be of inestimable value during the hard times which we are told are coming.

Miss Frick is very proud of the work which the volunteers have accomplished.

"When you think," she says, "of the different classes of women who work here—the ancient prejudices which we have had to overcome in teaching old housekeepers new canning tricks—and realize that a worker may come in for only an hour and leaves her work half done when she rushes home to get her husband's dinner, and that some one else must jump in and finish the job, and—well, dozens of other obstacles—it is really remarkable that we have accomplished what we have!"

She was interrupted by a tiny little woman, all in soft gray, who said:

"The truck is ready. I am taking the boys to the pier."

"This is our pier manager," Miss Frick explained. "She goes on the big electric truck which the city has just given us to collect the goods which the gods provide."

I hinted that I should like to go with her, and a few minutes later I clambered into the truck with the boys and off we went across the city to the pier.

On the way across town I pestered the little gray one with questions, and she, being a kindly soul, answered them all with the utmost patience.

I learned that through an arrangement with the Board of Health and the managers of the various piers where the freight vessels come in the broken barrels or crates of fruit and vegetables, or those which have become bruised in the process of transportation, instead of being consigned to the dump heap are given to the canning kitchen.

The kitchen uses all that it is possible to use and sells the rest to the people of the neighborhood at a nominal sum, which just covers the cost of transportation from the pier to the kitchen and the labor of the boys who pick the contents of the barrels over.

It was found that even with its ever-increasing retail trade it was impossible for the kitchen to get rid of all that is given it; so recently arrangements have been made to send the surplus to various institutions, asking the small sum that the neighborhood people pay.

"This was brought about because we had four hundred barrels of cucumbers given us," explained the gray one, "which we couldn't use. It almost broke our hearts to refuse them, but we had just been swamped with cucumbers until we couldn't use another one."

Everybody on the pier knew the little gray lady and her helpers and greeted them as fellow laborers. The pier manager came forward.

"Mornin'," he said; "there's thirty-one barrels of potatoes for you in Section 65 and forty barrels in Section 78."

"How lovely," murmured the gray one, and she led the way down the pier. Arrived at Section 65 the swarm of helpers set to work at once. They procured empty barrels and began to sort the potatoes—thirty-one barrels here and forty more further down the pier! It looked like an endless task to me, but it didn't seem to feaze the gray one or her assistants.

"We shall probably get fifty barrels of good potatoes out of this lot," she said, "and when we have finished we shall go to the Old Dominion Line pier and get twenty-seven barrels of summer squash. Oh, we'll be back at the kitchen at 4 o'clock!"

I left them hard at work and went back to the kitchen, where I partook of a luncheon composed of a sandwich—and a very good one it was—which cost five cents and a glass of iced tea at three cents, both provided by the canteen committee of the National League for Women's Service, which serves this luncheon every day for the workers in the kitchen.

It was a good luncheon, but I must confess that my mouth watered as I looked at those hundreds of jars of preserves on the shelves, "not to be opened until winter." Did the workers feel the same, I wondered, or had they grown immune, like the girls who tend at the candy counters, to this condition of "water, water everywhere, and not a drop to drink"?

The Tribune Institute

will hold a Canning and Drying Demonstration next week at the People's Market, 149th Street and Cortlandt Ave., Bronx.

The products that are now cheapest and most plentiful will be canned and dried. In addition to the actual demonstration and explanation of processes, printed material, giving clear directions as to the best methods of canning and drying, will be distributed to visitors.

The demonstrations will be given from Tuesday, August 14, to Saturday, August 18, inclusive, from 10 to 12 each morning and from 3 to 5 in the afternoon. On Saturday an additional evening demonstration will be given from 7 to 8:30.

Provisions Sent from the Piers and Sold at Cost